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From: Martin Shafman [mjshafman@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2011 10:48 PM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Subject: Testimony Opposing cuts to DCF Parole Staff

February 27, 2011,

Re: Testimony opposing cuts to DCF Parole Staff

To: Appropriations Committee

My name is Martin Shafman and I have been employed in the Juvenile Justice Field in Connecticut for approximately 15 years. Four of those years was working for North American Family Institute Outreach and Tracking Program that was a non-profit based intervention program for youths on probation and parole. I have spent my last 11 years in State Service as a Juvenile Probation Officer and as a DCF Parole Officer/Social Worker. Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony regarding my opposition to the DCF Budget Proposal to Increase Parole caseloads by the associated reduction of 22 Parole Social Workers. The proposed budget cut is located in Governor Malloy's Budget Summary under the Department of Children and Families on page B-140 under "Recommended Significant Changes." The Juvenile Parole Services Division is charged with the responsibility to provide supervision, case management, crisis intervention, and oversight of treatment to all youth who have been committed as Delinquents by the Superior Court of Juvenile Matters for the State of Connecticut.

This proposal originated from the previous DCF Administration who were asked by Governor Rell to submit a budget proposal to reduce cost by 10 %. In December of 2010, our former Chief of Staff Carl Kemper informed a concerned parole group that the proposal to cut parole officers was made to satisfy Governor Rell's mandates to have a budget proposal completed for the new Governor who would be entering office in January of 2011. He assured all staff that most likely the new Governor and new Commissioner of DCF will submit a different budget that probably will not include cuts to Parole Staff due to the Raise the Age Law going into effect in 2012.

Chief of Staff Kemper also indicated that parole staff were cut because he was unable to cut any DCF Social Workers due to the Juan F. Consent Decree. It was clear that the previous administration targeted the Division of Juvenile Parole for cuts only because we were not covered by the Juan F. Consent Decree and our jobs were the easiest area to make cuts in. It was also notable that none of the 14 management positions in DCF Juvenile Justice, who do not have direct case contact, were targeted for cuts. Unfortunately, this budget proposal has made it into Governor Malloy's Budget and if passed through the legislature it will have a debilitating effect on the youths and families involved in the Juvenile Justice System, regressing any gains made in Juvenile Justice over the past 10 years, and ironically may cost the state many times more than the \$1.7M on this budget line cut

First, this proposal was based on 2009 staff numbers and 2009 case number totals. In 2009, the Juvenile Parole Department comprised of 47 Juvenile Parole Officers and 10 Juvenile Parole Supervisors. Since that time, 8 Juvenile Parole Officers and 1 supervisor have retired without

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rehiring their positions. Currently, the Juvenile Parole Division is made up of 39 Juvenile Parole Officers and 9 Juvenile Parole Supervisors. By July 1st of 2011, 2 more Juvenile Parole Officers and 3 Juvenile Parole Supervisors will be retired leaving the division with 37 Juvenile Parole Officers and 6 Juvenile Parole Supervisors. With the proposed budget cut of 22 parole workers, this would leave 15 Juvenile Parole Officers and 6 Supervisors to cover the entire State of Connecticut. Additionally, in 2012 possibly 4 more Juvenile Parole Officers and 1 more Juvenile Parole Supervisor will retire, which would leave the department with only 11 Juvenile Parole Officers and 5 Parole Supervisors. The State of Connecticut currently projects a 60% increase in the juvenile parole population in 2012 due to the Raise the Age legislation. Additionally, there is pending legislation to have DCF Parole service youths up to the age of 20 that will further increase the population. Even if the current population of youths were to stay stagnant, the services and supervision of these youths would be drastically undercut due to case to staff ratios.

This current budget proposal was based on a population total of 290 youths and families in October of 2010. The current parole population as of 2/25/11 is 360 youth and 360 families. This is a 20% increase in four months and the caseloads are increasing daily due to the first installment of Raise the Age legislation (16 year olds). With the proposed cuts to parole staff on July 1, 2011 the parole social worker to client ratio will be 36:1. The second phase of Raise the Age legislation (17 year olds) will go into effect July 2012, with an anticipated increase to the parole population of 60%-65%. If our current number (360) stayed the same and didn't grow, a 60% increase would be 576 youth and 576 families. This increase would make the caseload ratio of youth to Parole social workers in July 2012 64:1. Both of these numbers 36:1 and 64:1 would make completing mandated tasks impossible. These mandates currently include face to face contact with youth in their homes twice monthly and their face to face contact once per month while their child is in placement. Other mandates include but are not limited to monthly or weekly contact with service providers, weekly contact with community base providers, and weekly contact with school systems. All contacts are documented in our CONDOIT system and must be entered within 5 days of contact. Other duties include: assessing risk and needs using our new youth compass tool and motivational interview techniques, developing treatments plans, completing status reports/updates as requested by the courts, providing transportation for families and clients, identify and referring youth and families to appropriate services, educational advocate for youth and families, assist in finding financial assistance and much more. The reduction of parole staff will disable workers ability to complete such duties given the increase in ratios of 36:1 and 64:1. All of these services have progressed over the years due to best case practices that show these contacts and partnerships with families and communities leads to less crimes among the people we service.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to measure prevention to prove increases in successes, but through our efforts we are able to help families and communities make progress. Unfortunately, this budget line item reduction will reverse much progress in Juvenile Justice System in Connecticut. It will lead to more youths being incarcerated and less interventions to support these young men and women to make positive changes.

Since beginning my career as a Juvenile Parole Officer in 2000 some numbers have drastically changed.

The most apparent number is at that time we serviced 900 to 1000 youths Committed as Delinquents.

Our staff size was approximately 30 parole officers who were supervised by 5 supervisors who reported to 1 Program Supervisor who reported to the Superintendent of Long Lane School. Within 5 months of my employment my case load was 50 kids. It was nearly impossible to see all kids in a 30 day period, let alone work with their families, and attend so many court dates that would come up due to the lack of support our clients had. We were purely reactionary and spent most of our time "putting out fires." By 2011, these numbers have changed significantly. We now service 360 youths Committed as Delinquents and with retirements we will be very close to the same staffing numbers compared to 11 years ago. The Juvenile Parole Division has 2 non-caseload carrying staff. With retirements our number of caseload carrying workers would be 35 compared to 30 in the year 2000. The way we service the youths has

dramatically changed as well. We are by far more intervention based, speciality based, and best practice based when performing our duties. Over the years the documentation, referral paperwork, court paperwork, and assessment work has also increased. Workers currently work with less youths and families than in the year 2000, but due the way we individualize cases, see families in their homes, partnership with communities, utilize risk assessments, implement Treatment Plans, the work is even more busier now and this additional work is well it. Our speciality units now include a girl specific unit, a speciality unit that works solely with youths who have committed sex crimes, and a Gang Intervention Unit that is involved in implementing a OJJDP Best Case Practice Model that includes community partnerships and interventions to help these high risks youths get out of gangs and become productive citizens. Another number that is drastically different than 11 years ago is the number of managers now.

We went from 1 Program Supervisor to now in 2011 2 Program Supervisors, a Program Director, and a Juvenile Justice Bureau Chief. There are approximately 14 other program managers in the Juvenile Justice Bureau that have no direct contact with cases. As our population decreased dramatically by 70%, our managers have increased by 800%. Decreasing case load carrying workers will effect the well being of this population we serve, the safety of the community and negatively effect the recidivism rate. If cuts are to be made in Juvenile Justice, they should be more focused on the management staff that have little to no effect on families, communities, or recidivism rates.

Lastly, the budget proposal to reduce juvenile parole staff by 22 is stated to save the state 1.7 million dollars in savings, which is grossly overstated. The Juan F. Decree ruling is the reason why the previous administration chose to cut parole; by the consent decree they cannot cut DCF Social Workers. Though a stipulated agreement in 2001, Juvenile Parole joined the P-2 Social Worker Bargaining Unit thus if parole officers are cut, they have bumping rights. The parole officer group is a very veteran group and the last cut will be with someone who has 15 years of state service. All 22 parole officers will be allowed to bump social workers in the region resulting in layoffs of 22 social workers who work on the Child Protection Side of DCF. Since our jobs are different, all 22 juvenile parole officers will have to be re-trained and become familiar with different policies, procedures, computers systems, and courts.

Sadly, 22 CPS social workers who wanted to be in the social work field, who are trained, and motivated to work, will be let go due to this cut of 22 juvenile parole officers. Training will cost money and most likely social workers will be getting more overtime to cover cases as these parole officers get trained.

At any rate, now case loads of 44 workers, both CPS and Parole will receive less services. The families and kids will be the ones to suffer. Currently it costs \$600,000 to \$900,000 a year to house a youth at CJTS. This is much more costly than housing a prisoner in corrections. With Juvenile Parole Officer reverting back to 1990's methods of case management (64:1 cases to worker ratio causing a "fire prevention mentality) more youths will end up at CJTS or committing more serious crimes. With a 60 percent increase in cases and a 50% reduction in Parole Officers one can easily see how the population of CJTS could rise 100 more youths resulting in \$90M more in a budget year. I encourage every member to demand that the Commissioner of DCF come up with some real reductions of cost the will result in the best for these kids, the families, communities, and reduction in crime. The one constant that has not changed in Juvenile Justice is the front line workers, they are the ones with the expertise, commitment, connections, and relationships with kids and families that will make the difference and save the state money. With the reduction of a few high paid managers on the Juvenile Justice side, ones who have little or no responsibility, the same \$1.7M could be saved in this budget. I supported and voted for Governor Malloy because of his commitment to reduce redundant management in state agencies, not to cut front line workers which will only do harm and have little impact on the state's deficit.

Thank you again for taking the time to read and listen to my testimony against the DCF proposed cuts to 22 parole staff.

Sincerely,

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